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(Tentative Translation)

September 28, 2005

**Statement by Expo Association Chairman Shoichiro Toyoda at
Media Center Press Conference**

I'm Shoichiro Toyoda, chairman of the Japan Association for the 2005 World Exposition.

On Sunday, September 25, the 2005 World Exposition, Aichi, Japan, came to a close without incident, 185 days after opening on March 25. We welcomed more than 22 million visitors, far in excess of our initial target of 15 million visitors, and I am truly happy that our Exposition turned out to be so popular. I am profoundly grateful for the efforts made by the official participating countries and organizations and domestic participants, as well as for the operational support we received from many individuals, organizations, and companies. I would also like to extend my gratitude to visitors who came to enjoy the Expo from countries around the world as well as to those who offered us words of encouragement. And I am deeply indebted to the members of the media who helped make this event a resounding success through their deep understanding and full cooperation.

Looking back, efforts to host the 2005 World Exposition in Aichi began in 1989, when a committee was formed to consider a bid. And full-scale preparations were launched eight years ago, when the BIE General Assembly named Aichi the host of

EXPO 2005. These eight years have not always been easy, as the originally planned site in the Kaisho district of Seto had to be changed to the Nagakute area. The favorable response to EXPO 2005, therefore, is the result of the long and serious debates held during the preparation stage on a broad range of subjects, including the theme, site planning, and management approaches, as well as the continuous improvements that were made after the Expo opened.

We are very proud, moreover, that no major accidents occurred during the Expo, in spite of the unstable international situation and the fact that we welcomed so many visitors and foreign dignitaries on a daily basis. I deeply appreciate the understanding and cooperation of our many visitors and everyone concerned.

I believe that visitors fully enjoyed the Expo and that many were filled with dreams and hopes for the future. Of even greater importance, though, was that under the theme of "Nature's Wisdom," this Expo in Aichi became the source of key messages and proposals on how humankind should seek to coexist with nature and build an environmentally sustainable society. Each of the more than 22 million visitors will continue to carry this message. Another major achievement has been the active participation of civic groups and private citizens not only during the Expo period but also from the preparatory phase.

Even as advanced information and communications technologies lower the walls that had separated countries in the past, there seems to be no end to ethnic and religious confrontation and conflict. The twenty-first century must become a turning point when humans acknowledge diversity and seek to coexist harmoniously not only among

themselves but also with our planet.

EXPO 2005 featured not only exhibits but also a variety of events, including those held to commemorate the respective National Days. The opportunities for international and cultural exchange highlighted the global nature of this spectacle and added great significance to the concept of “Grand Intercultural Symphony.”

Due to the presence of 125 official participating countries and international organizations, moreover, we have been able to welcome an unprecedented number of foreign dignitaries in a short period of time. This will lead, I am certain, to positive publicity about this region; this experience should also become a valuable asset for the host region and contribute greatly to its further internationalization.

The closing of EXPO 2005 does not signal the end of efforts to learn from “Nature’s Wisdom.” It is important that our achievements be further developed in the coming years. I pray that such efforts will be made not only by those who were involved in the Expo’s operations but also by those who visited the site, including young children who will be the leaders of tomorrow, and by all those who voiced their support for our endeavor.

Thank you all very much for a truly memorable experience.